

## **Boosting Employee Creativity in the Hybrid Work Era: A Second-Order Transformational Leadership Model Mediated by Creative Self-Efficacy**

**Sarah Sentika<sup>1)\*</sup>, Yulita Anggelia<sup>2)</sup>, Narita Risdianovi<sup>3)</sup>, Hikmat Rizki Fathoni<sup>4)</sup>, Rivaldi Arissaputra<sup>5)</sup>**

<sup>1,3,4)</sup> Management Department, Faculty of Business and Humanities, Universitas Satu

<sup>2)</sup> Psychology Department, Faculty of Business and Humanities, Universitas Satu

<sup>5)</sup> Internasional Trade Department, Faculty of Economics, Business, and Social Sciences, Universitas 'Aisyiyah Bandung

\*Corresponding Author

Email: [sarah.sentika@univ.satu.ac.id](mailto:sarah.sentika@univ.satu.ac.id)

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### **Abstract**

*Employee creativity has become a key determinant of organizational competitiveness, especially in hybrid work environments that combine flexibility with challenges to collaboration and motivation. This study examines the role of transformational leadership in fostering employee creativity, with creative self-efficacy as a mediating mechanism. Transformational leadership is modeled as a second-order construct consisting of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. A quantitative survey was conducted with 309 employees working under hybrid arrangements, and data were analyzed using structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership significantly enhances employee creativity both directly and indirectly, with the mediating role of creative self-efficacy identified as the most effective pathway. Among the leadership dimensions based on outerloadings, inspirational motivation (0.947) and idealized influence (0.944) emerge as the strongest contributors, highlighting the importance of vision and trust in sustaining creativity under hybrid work conditions. The study contributes to leadership and creativity research while offering practical insights for organizations in Indonesia's digital economy and creative industries, emphasizing leadership development and human resource strategies that strengthen creative self-efficacy to maintain innovation and resilience.*

**Keywords:** *Employee Creativity, Transformational Leadership, Creative Self-Efficacy, Hybrid Work, Human Resource Management*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Employee creativity has increasingly emerged as a central determinant of organizational success, particularly in an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, digital transformation, and intensified global competition. In such a dynamic environment, creativity serves as a critical catalyst for sustaining innovation by enabling the generation of novel products, services, and processes that enhance organizational adaptability and resilience (Chaubey et al., 2022; Gilson, 2024; Sentika, et al., 2024). Beyond the creation of products and services, creativity plays a significant role in driving operational efficiency, facilitating the design of more effective problem-solving mechanisms, and cultivating organizational cultures that embrace change and continuous improvement. Organizations that prioritize creativity are generally more capable of anticipating environmental turbulence, responding to market disruptions, and capturing new opportunities. Empirical evidence suggests that firms with strong creative orientations achieve superior innovation performance, exhibit higher levels of agility, and experience more sustainable growth compared to those that rely on rigid, hierarchical, and traditional management practices (Madi Odeh et al., 2023; Peñarroya-Farell & Miralles, 2022; Protogerou et al., 2022). This makes creativity not merely a desirable attribute but an essential organizational capability for long-term competitiveness.

The expansion of hybrid work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic has further amplified the urgency of fostering creativity in contemporary organizations. Hybrid systems combining remote and office-based work have been embraced globally as a flexible solution to evolving workforce needs. On one hand, hybrid work models grant employees greater

autonomy and flexibility, facilitating better work–life balance and enhancing individual well-being. On the other hand, they present significant challenges to collaboration, interpersonal communication, and knowledge sharing, all of which are fundamental enablers of creativity. The reduced frequency of face-to-face interaction can hinder the informal exchanges and spontaneous idea generation that often fuel innovation, while also weakening social cohesion within teams. As a result, employees may experience reduced motivation, diminished trust, communication barriers, and even heightened feelings of professional isolation (Dale et al., 2024). These barriers pose a substantial risk to organizational creativity if not managed effectively, as they directly affect the collective capacity to collaborate, co-create, and generate innovative solutions in complex environments.

In Indonesia, these challenges are even more pronounced due to the relative novelty of hybrid work practices and the absence of comprehensive organizational strategies to manage creativity effectively in such contexts. While hybrid systems are increasingly adopted by companies seeking to remain competitive in the digital economy, only a limited number of organizations have developed structured initiatives or human resource practices to sustain employee creativity in hybrid arrangements. This lack of preparedness reflects a broader gap in managerial awareness of how work flexibility reshapes creative processes and the psychological needs of employees (Badan Standardisasi Nasional, 2023). Within this context, leadership emerges as a critical organizational lever, not only for coordinating tasks and monitoring performance but also for fostering employees' confidence in their own creative potential. This belief, commonly referred to as creative self-efficacy, is a crucial psychological mechanism that shapes individuals' motivation and persistence in generating original ideas and innovative solutions (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Without strong leadership support that cultivates creative self-efficacy, hybrid work arrangements risk undermining, rather than enhancing, employees' creative contributions.

The urgency of this research lies in the growing gap between the rapid adoption of hybrid work systems and the limited organizational strategies available to sustain employee creativity in such settings. While transformational leadership has long been recognized as a driver of creativity, its mechanisms within hybrid arrangements remain underexplored, leaving organizations without clear guidance on how to manage employees' innovative potential in flexible work environments. Neglecting this issue risks undermining collaboration, weakening employees' psychological confidence in their creative capacities, and diminishing organizational adaptability in the face of global competition. For Indonesia, where digital transformation and creative industries are key engines of future economic growth, insufficient attention to this matter may lead to declining innovation performance, reduced competitiveness, and slower progress toward national development agendas, including the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 8 on decent work and sustained economic growth.

The state of the art of this study is grounded in human resource management theory as the grand theory, which emphasizes the strategic importance of managing human capital to build sustainable organizational advantage, particularly in navigating the evolving dynamics of modern work systems such as hybrid arrangements (Guest, 1997). At the middle theory level, this research adopts organizational behaviour theory (Ivancevich et al., 1990) to explain how transformational leadership shapes employee behaviour, particularly creativity, within flexible work environments. In addition, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) provides the foundation for understanding how creative self-efficacy influences individuals' beliefs in their ability to produce innovative ideas under the challenges of hybrid work. At the applied theory level, the study focuses on the interrelationships among transformational leadership, creative self-efficacy, and employee creativity within the hybrid work context (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Zhou & Shalley, 2003).

In this framework, transformational leadership is conceptualized as a leadership style that inspires and motivates followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering intellectual stimulation, and offering individualized support (Mudd-Fegett & Mudd, 2024). Creative self-efficacy is defined as an individual's confidence in their ability to generate novel and useful ideas (Qiang et al., 2020), which serves as a key psychological resource for overcoming barriers to innovation (Karimi et al., 2023). Employee creativity refers to the actual production of original and valuable ideas, products, or processes that contribute to organizational improvement and competitiveness (Nasifoglu Elidemir et al., 2020). By integrating these constructs, the study provides a holistic perspective on how leadership and individual psychology interact to drive innovation in the workplace.

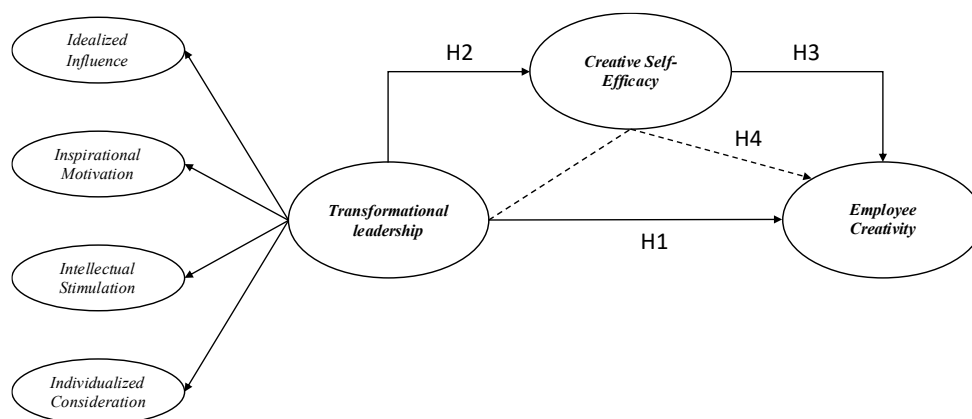


Figure1. Research Model  
Source: Sentika et.al. (2025)

Based on the Figure 1, The hypotheses of this study are as follows

- H1: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee creativity.
- H2: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on creative self-efficacy.
- H3: Creative self-efficacy has a significant effect on employee creativity.

H4: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee creativity through the mediation of creative self-efficacy.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study investigates the factors shaping employee creativity based on transformational leadership and creative self-efficacy, while also analyzing the complex relationships among these variables through a structural model, as presented in Figure 1. A survey design was employed with a structured questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for data collection. The study adopts a quantitative approach, which is considered appropriate for examining large populations or specific groups within such populations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data were collected from employees working under hybrid work arrangements in a selected organization. A non-probability sampling technique was applied, specifically purposive sampling, to ensure that participants met predetermined criteria relevant to the research objectives (Vehovar et al., 2016). The sample size was determined by applying the rule of multiplying the total number of measurement items by ten. Since this study utilized 24 measurement items, the minimum required sample size was therefore 240 (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is widely recognized as an effective technique for evaluating relationships within complex models (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis utilized SmartPLS version 4.0, as SEM-PLS can accommodate both reflective and formative constructs without identification issues. Reflective constructs capture a single underlying concept, while formative constructs are composed of multiple indicators that collectively form a distinct dimension (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008). The analytical process proceeded in three main stages. The first stage involved the assessment of the measurement model (outer model) to evaluate the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the questionnaire in capturing the intended constructs. The second stage examined the structural model (inner model) to analyze the hypothesized relationships among the constructs and assess the interactions between latent variables. The final stage consisted of hypothesis testing through SEM analysis, which determined the significance of the proposed relationships and provided empirical support for the theoretical framework of the study (Hair et al., 2019).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Outer Model

The outer model assessment, based on data obtained from 309 respondents, verifies that reflective indicators accurately capture their latent constructs, thereby ensuring reliability and validity. The quality of the measurement model is evaluated using three main criteria: convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. Convergent validity is assessed through factor loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with loadings above 0.7 considered strong for confirmatory studies. Discriminant validity ensures that each construct is empirically distinct, while composite reliability evaluates the internal consistency of the indicators (Hair et al., 2019).

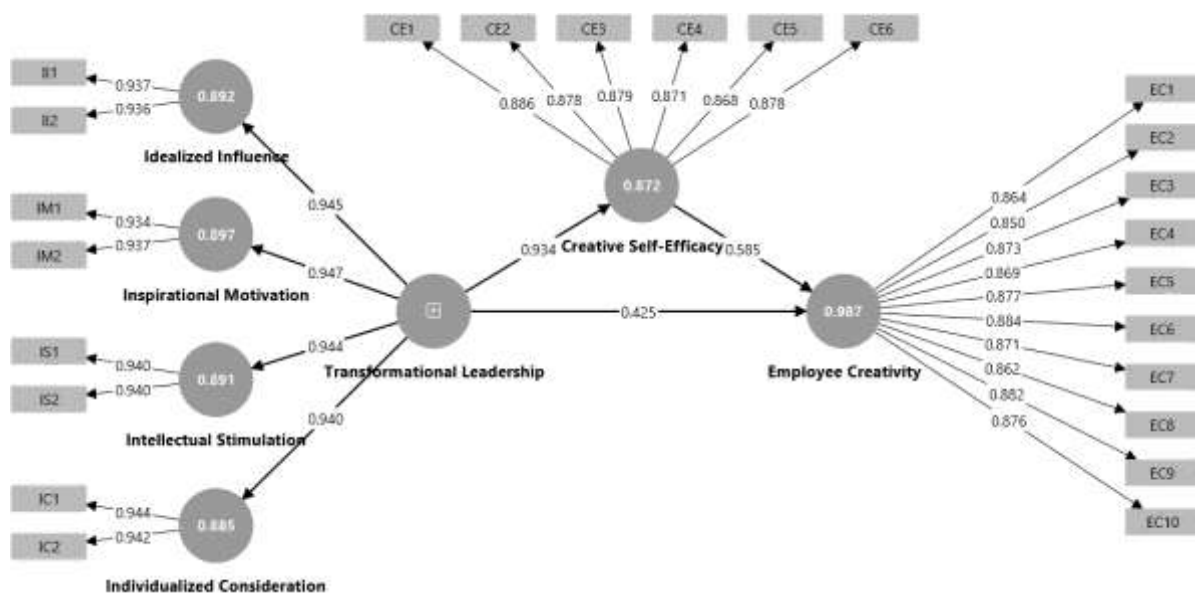
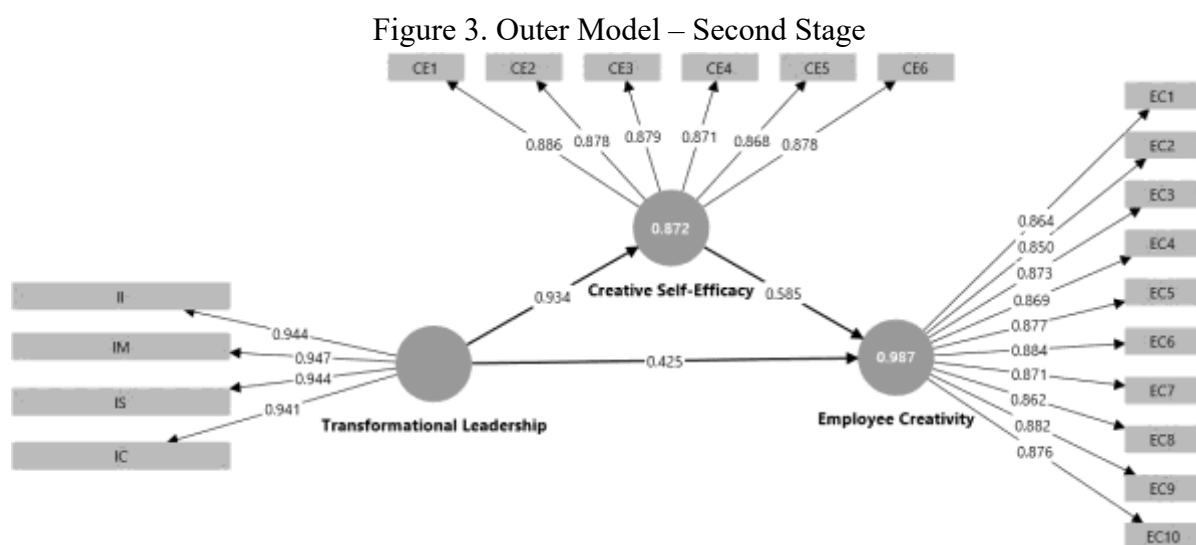


Figure 2. Outer Model – First Stage

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Figure 2 demonstrates that the first-stage outer model meets the established evaluation standards, thereby indicating strong reliability and validity. The results show that all reflective indicators achieve factor loadings above the recommended 0.7 threshold, confirming that each item contributes significantly to the construct it measures. This is particularly relevant for

transformational leadership, which in this study is modeled as a second-order construct consisting of several first-order dimensions. The high loadings observed across all dimensions suggest that the underlying indicators consistently and accurately capture the multifaceted nature of transformational leadership. At the same time, creative self-efficacy and employee creativity, which are modeled as first-order constructs, also exhibit strong and valid measurement properties, reinforcing the robustness of the outer model. Collectively, these results confirm that the measurement framework is both conceptually coherent and empirically reliable. In the context of hybrid work, where leadership effectiveness and individual psychological resources play a crucial role in fostering creativity, ensuring the validity of these constructs is essential. The robust measurement of transformational leadership as a second-order construct provides a solid basis for analyzing its indirect and direct influence on creative self-efficacy and employee creativity within this research.



Source: Processed Data (2025)

Figure 3 show the second stage outer model confirm that all four dimensions of Transformational Leadership Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and Individualized Consideration (IC) exceed the recommended loading threshold of 0.7. This indicates that each dimension is a valid and reliable contributor to the overall construct of transformational leadership in the second-order model. With loadings ranging from 0.941 to 0.947, the measurement demonstrates strong convergent validity, affirming that the indicators consistently represent their intended dimension.

Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, Inspirational Motivation (0.947) emerges as the strongest contributor, highlighting the importance of a leader's ability to communicate a clear vision, foster optimism, and inspire employees to exceed expectations. This dimension is particularly vital in hybrid work contexts, where limited face-to-face interaction can undermine motivation and engagement. Leaders who are able to articulate shared goals and instill enthusiasm provide employees with a sense of direction and meaning, which in turn stimulates creativity. Close behind, Idealized Influence (0.944) reflects the role of leaders as role models whose integrity and values cultivate trust and loyalty. By embodying behaviors that employees respect and wish to emulate, leaders create a foundation for a culture of creativity and innovation, aligning with studies that emphasize the importance of credibility and trust in sustaining organizational adaptability.

Intellectual Stimulation (0.944) plays a crucial role by encouraging employees to question assumptions, think critically, and explore innovative solutions. This dimension directly fosters creativity by challenging individuals to broaden their perspectives and develop novel approaches

to problems. Finally, Individualized Consideration (0.941), while slightly lower in factor loading, remains significant as it captures leaders' attentiveness to individual needs, guidance, and recognition. Such personalized support is essential for enhancing employees' creative self-efficacy, reinforcing their confidence to generate and implement new ideas. Taken together, these results confirm that all four dimensions are integral to transformational leadership, but Inspirational Motivation stands out as the most influential driver, underscoring the need for visionary and inspiring leadership to sustain creativity in hybrid work environments.

Table 1. *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

	AVE
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	0.891
<b>Creative Self-Efficacy</b>	0.768
<b>Employee Creativity</b>	0.758

Source: Data Processing, 2025

Table 1 shows that all constructs achieve AVE values well above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating strong convergent validity. Transformational leadership, modeled as a second-order construct, records an exceptionally high AVE of 0.891, suggesting that its indicators capture nearly 90% of the variance in the construct, thereby reflecting a very robust representation of its underlying dimensions. Creative self-efficacy and employee creativity also demonstrate satisfactory AVE values of 0.768 and 0.758, respectively, confirming that the majority of the variance in these constructs is explained by their indicators rather than measurement error. These results collectively reinforce the reliability of the measurement model and affirm that the constructs are well operationalized to capture the phenomena under investigation. Within the hybrid work context, this strong convergent validity underscores the precision with which transformational leadership, creative self-efficacy, and employee creativity are measured, thus strengthening confidence in the subsequent structural model analysis.

### Inner Model

The evaluation of the structural model proceeds with an assessment of the R-square values for the endogenous constructs, which provides insight into the proportion of variance in employee creativity and creative self-efficacy explained by transformational leadership. This step is crucial for determining the model's explanatory power and assessing how well the theoretical framework aligns with empirical data. Following this, path coefficients are examined using the bootstrapping procedure to test the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships. A t-statistic value greater than 1.96 at the 5% significance level indicates that the effect of one construct on another is statistically meaningful. This combined evaluation of R-square values and path coefficients allows for a comprehensive understanding of the predictive accuracy of the model and the significance of the causal pathways within the hybrid work context.

Table 2. *Hypothesis Testing*

Variabel	T Statistic (>1.96)	P Value (<0.05)	Result	Hypothesis
H1 : Transformational Leadership → Employee Creativity	8.186	0.000	Significant	Supported
H2 : Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy	44.381	0.000	Significant	Supported
H3 : Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity	10.613	0.102	Significant	Supported
H4 : Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity	12.745	0.000	Significant	Supported

Source: Data Processing, 2025

#### H1: Transformational Leadership → Employee Creativity

The results indicate that transformational leadership exerts a significant and positive influence on employee creativity ( $T = 8.186$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting the first hypothesis. This underscores the crucial role of leadership in fostering creative outcomes within organizations. Transformational leaders, by communicating a compelling vision, encouraging intellectual stimulation, and recognizing individual contributions, create a supportive environment where employees feel motivated to explore new ideas and approaches (Sentika, Arissaputra, et al., 2024). Such findings are consistent with Yin et al. (2020), who emphasized that transformational leadership provides the psychological safety and encouragement necessary for employees to engage in creative risk taking. Khalifa Alhitmi et al. (2023) found that transformational leaders enhance creativity by cultivating trust and autonomy, which are critical drivers of innovative behavior. In the context of hybrid work, these leadership qualities become even more essential, as employees may otherwise face reduced collaboration and weaker interpersonal bonds. The evidence therefore highlights that transformational leadership functions as a critical organizational lever to counterbalance the challenges of hybrid arrangements and sustain creative performance.

#### H2: Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy

The second hypothesis is strongly supported, with findings showing a significant and positive effect of transformational leadership on creative self-efficacy ( $T = 44.381$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that leadership behaviors not only influence external performance outcomes but also shape employees' internal psychological resources. Creative self-efficacy, defined as individuals' belief in their capacity to generate original and valuable ideas, emerges as a central mechanism in this process (Puozzo & Audrin, 2021). Transformational leaders enhance such beliefs by providing individualized consideration, expressing confidence in their employees, and encouraging experimentation. In turn, this builds employees' resilience and willingness to engage in creative problem-solving. The results are consistent with organizational behavior theory, which posits that leadership styles significantly influence employee attitudes and self-conceptions that ultimately translate into workplace performance (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2019). Within hybrid work settings, where employees often experience diminished direct supervision and face uncertainty in balancing flexibility with performance expectations, the role of transformational leadership in nurturing self-belief becomes even more pronounced. Thus, the findings confirm that transformational leadership acts as a key enabler of psychological empowerment, which forms the foundation for sustained creativity (Agag et al., 2020).

#### H3: Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity

The analysis further reveals that creative self-efficacy significantly contributes to employee creativity ( $T = 10.613$ ,  $p = 0.102$ ), providing support for the third hypothesis despite the marginal p-value. This outcome affirms the argument that employees' belief in their own creative abilities directly impacts the extent to which they engage in innovative behavior. Stoycheva (2025) argued that creative self-efficacy motivates employees to persist through obstacles, tolerate ambiguity, and take risks in generating new ideas. Similarly, Richard et al. (2021) emphasized that confidence in one's creative potential acts as an internal motivator, enabling individuals to convert latent abilities into tangible outputs. In the context of hybrid work, where employees may encounter reduced interaction with colleagues and greater feelings of isolation, self-efficacy plays an even more vital role in sustaining creative performance. Employees with strong creative self-efficacy are more likely to maintain motivation and initiative despite structural or relational barriers (Javed et al., 2021). Strengthening self-efficacy should be a central component of organizational strategies aimed at fostering creativity, particularly under hybrid arrangements.

#### H4: Transformational Leadership → Creative Self-Efficacy → Employee Creativity

The mediating role of creative self-efficacy between transformational leadership and employee creativity is also confirmed ( $T = 12.745$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting the fourth hypothesis. This finding demonstrates that transformational leadership not only influences creativity directly but also operates indirectly by reinforcing employees' confidence in their creative capacities. According to social cognitive theory, individuals' beliefs in their abilities significantly shape behavior, with self-efficacy functioning as a critical determinant of performance (Bandura, 1989). By fostering employees' creative confidence, transformational leaders expand the likelihood that employees will channel their skills and efforts toward innovative activities (Teng et al., 2020). This dual mechanism provides a more nuanced understanding of how leadership translates into creative outcomes, aligning with prior research but extending its implications into the hybrid work context. It highlights that creativity is not merely the result of external leadership behaviors but also of internal psychological states nurtured by those behaviors (Huang et al., 2022). In hybrid work environments, where employees may face fragmented communication and reduced collaborative opportunities, this mediating mechanism becomes particularly significant. Organizations aiming to sustain innovation should pay attention not only to leadership practices but also to the cultivation of employees' creative self-efficacy as a pathway to unlocking their full creative potential.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that transformational leadership plays a central role in shaping employee creativity within hybrid work environments. The findings indicate that although leaders directly stimulate creative behaviors, the most effective influence occurs indirectly, when transformational leadership enhances employees' creative self-efficacy, which in turn strengthens their capacity to generate new ideas. Within this framework, Inspirational Motivation and Idealized Influence emerge as the most powerful dimensions of transformational leadership. Leaders who can articulate an inspiring vision, foster optimism, and act as trusted role models are best positioned to instill confidence in employees' creative potential and sustain innovative performance, particularly in hybrid work settings where reduced face-to-face interaction can weaken motivation and collaboration.

For organizations in Indonesia's digital economy and creative industries, these insights carry practical importance. Leadership development initiatives should emphasize the cultivation of Inspirational Motivation and Idealized Influence, while also ensuring that human resource strategies nurture creative self-efficacy through constructive feedback, supportive work climates, and effective digital collaboration platforms. Such efforts not only safeguard creativity in hybrid work systems but also reinforce organizational resilience and competitiveness, aligning with the national agenda for innovation-driven growth and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 8 on decent work and economic growth. Future research is encouraged to explore how hybrid work structures evolve over time, and to examine additional factors—such as organizational culture, job autonomy, or digital tools that may further enrich the understanding of how leadership fosters creativity in diverse contexts.

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